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OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE/
DIRECTOR OF DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20301

13 January 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. LATIMER

SUBJECT: NIE 11-3-8 76, Soviet Forces for Intercontinental Conflict
Through the 1980s

This year's NIE 11 3/8 is a deeply paradoxical document. In spite of the rancor in some press leaks, it is generally forthright, objective, and honest in its debates and issues. While far from ideal, it is a major improvement over last year's product, and that product was by no means a bad one. Yet, the document also leaves most of the critical issues it deals with in a state of controversy. The resulting paradox is that better intelligence analysis means telling the user that intelligence is uncertain about both Soviet objectives and capabilities.

At one level, this uncertainty has had the effect of polarizing various members of the Community into making statements that seem more reflective of their own ideological views of the Soviet Union than the evidence. This, in turn, has led to an inordinate amount of leaks, special interest pleading, and "and running". This is likely to focus much of the debate over NIE 11-3/8 around the resulting "storm and drang", and the politics of the "B team" report.

At another level, however, this level of uncertainty raises far more significant issues about how much more the Community can do within the limits of its present approach to intelligence analysis. While the Community can endlessly debate its present view of the issues, and slowly revise its positions as the evidence changes, it seems unlikely that it can develop better insights into the issues it has raised unless it broadens and improves its approach to problem solving.

A. Potential Improvements in Intelligence Analysis

Fortunately, some important options do seem to be available for improving the Community approach to intelligence on Soviet strategic forces if the resources can be made available, and if such options can be adopted in spite of organizational and bureaucratic barriers. The techniques might not resolve the issues raised in NIE 11-3/8, but it should make it possible to understand them far better, and to put them in a more objective context.

OSD and DIA have no objection to declassification and release.

OSD and DIA review completed.

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1. The Use of Exchange Analysis

The present NIE addresses Soviet capabilities largely in terms of static indicators, and then attempts to make judgments about the potential importance of these indicators in shaping Soviet actions and perceptions. While the NIE does make use of dynamic analysis in determining the marginal effect of given Soviet developments or actions on residual missile warheads and bomber weapons (pg 63 - 70), it does not apply dynamic analysis to such critical issues as the potential importance of Soviet civil defense, the use or non-use of Backfire, or potential Soviet confidence in achieving given types of warfighting superiority over the United States.

It seems likely that dynamic analysis can be applied to virtually all of these issues, and that it might do much to narrow the scope of the debates within the present draft. In particular, intelligence might be able to greatly improve its insights into future Soviet strategic capabilities if it worked closely with OJCS-SAGA and the JSTPS in broadening its use of dynamic modeling. Similar aids may exist in models developed for OSD(NA), COMUSCIN(NTA), and ODDI(PES).

2. The Use of Mission Capability Analysis

It should also be possible to improve the Community's use of mission capability analysis. The NIE now tends to focus on trends or shifts in technical performance parameters, rather than on what improved Soviet systems can do.

For example, the comparative assessment of Backfire range capabilities on page 33 of the NIE is interesting in terms of the different Community views of the Backfire's range, but says nothing about the Backfire's potential mission employment value. Although five pages are spent on performance issues relating to this one system (35 - 40), not one word is said about how Backfire would be employed against potential targets or about the additional mission capability it would provide. Further, no analysis is provided as to how the Backfire's mission capabilities might differ from those of existing Soviet strategic bombers.

An analogous situation arises in the treatment of the new Delta III submarine, and the treatment of improvements in ICBM accuracy and warhead numbers. The latter are included in the analysis of counterforce residuals in surprise attack conditions, but little is said about the importance of any given improvement in Soviet capability on operational capability.

Work done by ODDR&E, DP&E, and the Services indicates that it is possible to provide significant insights as to such mission capabilities for U.S. systems, and that applying such analysis to Soviet systems might do much to resolve the importance of present technical debates. The Air Force has made particularly good use of operations research techniques in its studies of the Backfire by Air Force Studies and Analysis.

3. The Impact of New Systems

Both dynamic analysis and mission capability analysis could be applied to analyzing the potential importance of some of the new systems debated in the NIE. For example, the comments on Soviet ASW developments could almost certainly be improved in depth by using U.S. Navy and DP&E studies of how much given developments could potentially affect SSBM survivability. The same is true of cost-effectiveness and marginal benefit analysis of high energy particle weapons or additional ABM forces, of the potential deployment of a mobile ICBM, or of the impact of deploying new low altitude defense systems.

The analytic tools are available to scope the potential rate of their deployment in much more depth than is possible in the present NIE. It should be possible to use these tools to confirm or deny the potential impact of given systems in a given time frame, and resolve much of the speculative controversy in the present NIE.

4. Improved Comparative Trend Analysis

The NIE already makes good use of static trend analysis in measuring basic force strengths. It also provides good red-blue comparisons of most aspects of basic Soviet strategic force strength. Nevertheless, it does seem that some of the discussion of relative technological and mission capability maturity could be improved by providing better red-blue trend comparisons of factors like ICBM accuracy, bomber performance, and SSBM performance. Similarly, improved analysis of Soviet civil defense and hardening activity should permit trend comparisons between the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

Work already done by the USAF and DIA could also provide valuable measures of relative activity levels in areas like missile firings, system development, new deployments, etc. Such trend analyses and comparisons might do a great deal to better define issues which are now described only in general terms, and which sometimes seem to be described by CIA and State as if they were not aware of the exact comparison between U.S. and Soviet levels of activity.

5. Analysis of Soviet Perceptions

The preceding techniques would all provide insights into capabilities. Intentions could be indirectly inferred from such insights, but further improvement seems possible. The present NIE does not make any reference to the statements of Soviet leaders or military officers, to Soviet analyses of the balance of power, or to Soviet operations research on the correlation of forces. It describes Soviet perceptions and intentions only through the eyes of U.S. intelligence officers.

There are always major uncertainties inherent in analyzing Soviet statements and in applying the limited intelligence available on how the Soviets calculate the balance of power. Nevertheless, such analysis

of Soviet statements, and analyses of the "correlation of forces" might provide substantially more perspective than simply quoting agency judgments. Work done by the Scots, the Air Force, Shulman and others indicates that such analysis is possible, and would be a useful supplement to the present discussion of goals and objectives.

6. Critical Factor Analysis

The present NIE tends to focus on given Soviet activities or developments largely because some major element of the user or producer community tended to focus on that particular development. This method of sub-optimization has a somewhat random character, and significant improvement may be possible. Admittedly, no NIE could possibly analyze every potential factor shaping Soviet forces. At the same time, a great deal of effort seems to be debating issues which may have less impact on Soviet warfighting capability or policy than other issues which are largely ignored.

For example, it seems likely that the uncertainty in Soviet missile mile hardness is as important to many exchanges as the use of Backfire or some potential improvements in ICBM CEP. The same may be true of uncertainty in forward yield, or a wide range of other factors that involve considerable technical effort and research to "scale" into an intelligence estimate.

ICM and RDA have developed techniques for assessing the importance of given changes in Soviet force structures which, coupled with the dynamic modeling done by JSTPS and SAGA, might allow the Community to sub-optimize far more efficiently, and with more confidence that it was focusing on the most critical issues or parameters. It must be stressed that such techniques are complex and resource intensive, but they are not so costly as improper random sub-optimization, and have broad benefits in improving the level of analysis available - to the Intelligence Community.

B. The Limits of Improved Analysis

Intelligence analysis of the goals and objectives behind the development of Soviet strategic forces has some of the aspects of a "one way mirror". The Soviets can look through their side of the mirror and see U.S. goals and objectives with a high degree of clarity. The U.S. can look in only through its side of the mirror with intense effort, and then see only dimly. Further, it constantly risks seeing the reflection of its own image and interpreting this as a picture of the Soviets.

The improvements just suggested are unlikely to resolve the critical issue of ultimate Soviet intentions raised in the present NIE. Indeed, the Soviets may not yet be clear in their own minds as to what their intentions are. It may well be that much of the intelligence debate about Soviet intentions in NIE 11-3/8 and 11-4 is premature. The Soviets may now be acting from a mix of all the intentions postulated by various

members of the Intelligence Community, and be exploiting the situation while studying U.S. reactions, they may narrow their perspective around a specific set of objectives and goals only after they determine their actual level of superiority over the U.S., if any.

The suggested improvements in analysis should, however, provide a much better picture of how soon the Soviets can do what, and of the importance of each action they may take. They should also provide a much clearer picture of how the Soviets perceive the present and potential balance, since it must be assumed that they have a reasonably clear insight into U.S. capabilities and trends. The present NIE fails to explore Soviet views of U.S. actions or perceptions of the balance in sufficient depth.

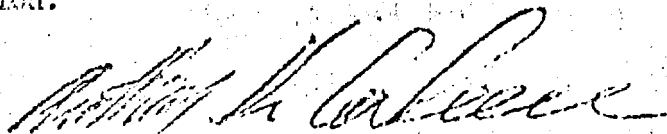
Most importantly, they should help intelligence to focus on the issues and the evidence rather than broad policy judgments. The present NIE has the flavor of having "plateaued out" because it has reached the limits of the present methods of analysis. This is partially disguised by the debate over the "B Team" issue, and the emotion that the new estimate has generated, but it seems likely that intelligence cannot do better with its present tools. It needs new methods of analysis to avoid freezing around its present views and approach.

C. The Problem of Resources and Organization

The changes outlined in this paper are, however, expensive in time and personnel. As a rough estimate, it would take about a 20 - 33% increase in present analytic resources to implement them, although substantial savings might be possible if the present modeling and operations analysis community was willing to provide its resources to help improve intelligence. It would require at least two years to fully introduce all of these techniques.

Further, the changes proposed would further blur the past barriers between intelligence, operations, and analysis. While intelligence would not be judging U.S. forces, or concerned with war outcomes vs. the marginal impact of Soviet force improvements, it would be making much more use of modeling and blue data. This would require a new relationship between intelligence and its users. This may be harder to achieve than getting the necessary resources.

Nevertheless, it seems worth exploring what can be done. The consequences of another NIE 11-3/8 frozen around the present issues seem worth the cost of such experimentation.



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11 January 1977

MEMORANDUM FOR DIRECTOR, DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

SUBJECT: NIE 11-4-76, Soviet Strategic Objectives

I suspect that I differ with the Intelligence Community more on its work on Soviet Strategic Objectives than on any other product that I have reviewed during the last two years. I feel that it is the duty of intelligence to communicate evidence and analysis rather than simply judgments. In contrast, the Community seems to feel that it is its duty to communicate judgments, and to provide these in the collective voice even when it disagrees.

As a result, I feel that NIE 11-4-76 has striking defects:

-- The Soviets are treated anonymously and their views are filtered through U.S. intelligence officers. No Soviet is quoted or referred to by name. Soviet views and Soviet words are not presented.

-- The Soviets are dealt with as a monolith. No discussion takes place of possible differences of view, or competing interests and needs, within the USSR.

-- No relevant trend is quantified or described in detail. Constant reference is made to how the Soviets may view shifts in the balance, and some reference is made to force trends, but no perspective of any kind on the scale of these trends or shifts in the balance is provided anywhere in the document.

-- No sense of history emerges. No reference is made to historical shifts in the way the Soviets describe the balance or their strategy.

-- No proponent of a given intelligence view is directly identified in the text. The footnotes sometimes reveal who takes a hard line, but the overall impact is that various analysts are judging unstated evidence differently without being willing to identify who says what.

-- The tone of many comments has the ring of prejudice rather than analysis. One has the impression that the intelligence community is talking at itself - in terms of long decided and long fixed conclusions - without really searching through the recent evidence and indicators.

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-- Soviet national strategy and objectives are dealt with in simplistic terms that have virtually vanished from modern political science or historical writing. The Soviets do not face an uncertain world with uncertain objectives, nor do they act from a range of conflicting motives. They must have one of two views of the world, and these views appear to be curiously close to those of the U.S. analysts interpreting them. (Echocentric mirror imaging)

-- The discussion of specific aspects of strategic objectives beginning on page 23 provides little insight. Where do the Soviet leaders feel they stand in terms of power projection, what is their view of their relative war survival capability, how do they feel about their theater nuclear capability and strategy, do they feel they could fight a two-front war in Asia and Europe? How are they analyzing the correlation of forces and what are they saying about it?

-- The Soviet view of the future is weakly and confusingly described. How do the Soviets probably view 1980 or 1985? What strategic trends do they see? What is the rate of change they visualize based on force trends, economics, etc.

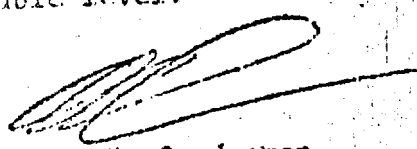
-- The discussion of Soviet internal problems and weaknesses remains equally vague. No numbers or examples are quoted. Instead, senior analysts seem to be echoing long held personal views of the potential weaknesses of Soviet society.

I recognize how hard it must have been to get any document out at all, and DIA's success in improving the initial draft. I find this product to be frightening, however, in its lack of depth and sophistication, in its lack of objectivity in searching out the evidence, in its failure to present the evidence in different views.

One harsh test of an intelligence document is to see whether it is so general that it can be applied with minimal change to some other area or problem. This is a strong indicator that a document has failed to provide the evidence and detail necessary to validate its judgments. I would suggest that it would take only limited effort to make NIE 11-4-76 an Elizabethan view of Spanish strategy, an Athenian view of Spartan strategy, or a Holy Roman view of the potential objectives of the Moors. The estimate is so anonymous, and so lacking in detail, that it could be applied to the possible objectives of any of history's major aggressive powers.

While DIA deserves praise for breaking out of the bureaucratic constraints of the last six years, NIE 11-4-76 does not represent a level of progress that will be adequate even for the coming year.

The Intelligence Community should start to follow-up this document with a far more sophisticated and objective approach. Further, I think the issues involved are so serious that, regardless of personnel constraints, a full time group should be set up in DIA to work on this subject. NIE 11-4-76 reveals all too clearly that intelligence has been blocked from such analysis for so long that its capabilities and depth of analysis have attrited below a minimally acceptable level.



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